Chapter 8: Facilities and Equipment

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Library media program services and collections determine the design and function of the facilities. Major functions of the library media center are instruction, production, and the housing, circulation, and centralized distribution of information resources and equipment used in the school's instructional program. Facility planning should consider the electronic distribution of information throughout the building and the district.

Current and future needs should be identified, studied, and put in writing. Consideration should be given to the school program, including curriculum, teaching methods, activities, services offered, staffing, and types of material and equipment to be handled. The importance of early planning cannot be stressed enough. In designing an attractive and functional facility, advance planning is essential in saving time and money.

The person in charge of the library media program, either at the district or building level, is responsible for coordinating the planning of the library media center facilities. Initial planning involves representatives from all user groups including library media personnel, administrators, teachers, and students.

The physical design of a library media center is a major factor in the efficient use of the library media center's resources. Facility design will be influenced by many factors, including:

- philosophy of the school;
- philosophy/mission of the library media program and services;
- content and extent of the instructional program;
- quantity and format of materials and equipment;
- access and security requirements of the collection;
- number and responsibility of LMC personnel;
- compliance with *State Standards*;
- district demographic projections; and
- compliance with ADA regulations

Following is a description of possible service areas and technical considerations recommended for optimum operation of a media center. Local needs and resources, with an emphasis on flexibility are integral to the planning process.

SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

Rapid changes in forms of information delivery require a flexible facility which can be modified as necessary. The goal should be a seamless learning environment which promotes the use of a variety of resources and formats. Some defined areas of library media center facilities will change. For example, the need for periodical storage areas may diminish as electronic full-text access becomes more available. Other elements of the facility will need to be modified to support emerging technologies. An abundance of electrical outlets throughout the facility is essential to promote integration of online and audio/visual resource.

It is important to identify goals and functions of programs before identifying requirements for areas within the facility. The library media specialist should work directly with the architect to help ensure that the design is tailored to accommodate identified resources, services, and functions with enough flexibility built in to allow for change and growth as needed. This design includes space requirements for ancillary areas as well as various services such as reading and reference.

Space requirements should support multiple learning activities but might not be defined spaces per se. Space should be provided for:

- reading and browsing;
- reference materials and services;
- individual viewing and listening;
- small group viewing and listening;
- production areas for students and faculty;
- workstations for electronic access;
- study tables and carrels;
- catalogs (if not automated);
- display facilities such as bulletin boards and cases;
- storytelling /casual reading areas; and
- thematic learning exploration (e.g. weather centers; bird watching).

Certain support areas, equipment and facilities are also necessary for effective management such as:

- conference and seminar areas;
- production laboratories;
- computer laboratories;
- security system;
- electronic workstations;
- circulation and distribution;
- offices for LMC personnel;
- staff workroom;
- AV and periodical storage;
- AV equipment distribution, storage and repair;
- running water; and
- bathroom facilities.

Recommendations for space allocations are listed in the *Standards For Missouri School Library Media Centers*, 1997.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

(See sample floor plans in Appendix I)

■ Supervision

Well organized facilities are conducive to the fulfillment of the library media center program goals. Before new schools are planned or existing schools are remodeled, careful consideration should be given to:

- designing all contiguous areas (conference rooms, production, and storage facilities) to ensure easy visual supervision by staff;
- locating high demand materials in limited access areas;
- placing the circulation desk near the exit; and
- placing some workstations near the circulation desk for assisting students.

■ Physical Access

To achieve its goals, the library media center must be convenient to classrooms and easily accessible to students and faculty.

Design Considerations

- The library media center should have its own outside entrance or be located near one so that the library media center is accessible before, during and after school and during vacation periods without security problems.
- Restroom facilities should be available within the secured area.
- Unimpeded physical access to all areas of the library media center should be provided for special needs users.
- Traffic flow should encourage frequent use and minimize distractions.

■ Aesthetics

The library media center should provide an attractive and inviting environment which encourages students and teachers to use its resources. Considerations for creating an aesthetically pleasing environment include:

- comfort and efficiency for users and staff;
- harmonious color schemes and aesthetic appeal;
- separate activity and study areas;
- a variety of flexible seating arrangements;
- provision for unobtrusive security during service hours and protection during non-use hours;
- signage, including Braille characters, to clearly indicate the location of information; and
- flexibility to meet changing needs and accommodate newer information-handling technologies without extensive remodeling.

■ Electrical Concerns

Electrical power, outlets and conduits must be sufficient for existing and future program activities. The library media center should provide enough digital drops for student access to networked electronic research, telecommunications, and electronic catalog stations. Additional drops would include those necessary for specialized areas (e.g., office, circulation desk, video/telecommunications area, television studio and multimedia production area). Grids of electrical and telecommunications wires installed during construction of a building increase flexibility and often eliminate the need for expensive future remodeling.

Abundant outlets on separate circuits should provide complete electrical service in the library media center without the use of extension cords. Security systems, automated circulation and computerized catalogs may require dedicated service. Uninterrupted power supplies/battery back-up systems should be investigated to support electronic systems.

■ Plumbing

Sinks with hot and cold running water are necessary in restrooms, the workroom, darkroom and production area. To reduce initial construction cost, the facilities should be in the same general area in order to centralize plumbing needs.

■ Light Control

All areas of the library media center should have appropriate lighting. Dimmer switches are useful in controlling the degree of light needed for versatile utilization of library media facilities. Window light should be controllable and window placement should not hinder space utilization. Special lighting should be provided for visually impaired students. When planning lighting, consult professional specifications.

■ Sound Control

Carpeted floors offer the single best method of controlling sound. Acoustically treated ceilings and walls also facilitate sound control. Adequate space between tables and high traffic areas will also help control noise.

■ Temperature Control

The library media center should have temperature and humidity controls which provide year-round comfort and optimum operation and storage conditions. Thermostatic controls must be separate from the main building controls to provide the protection necessary to maintain electronic equipment and software. Heating and air conditioning equipment should assure draft-free, non-distracting operation, and comfortable surroundings. Extreme hot or cold temperatures and humidity have a detrimental effect on the life span of electronic equipment and software. The life of print and non-print materials is also shortened by inadequate humidity and temperature controls. Ideal temperature is between 68 and 72 degrees

Fahrenheit, with humidity at 40%. Air conditioning is the most efficient and economic method of ventilation. Some areas (e.g., photolabs) may require special ventilation systems for safety reasons.

■ **Remote Information Sources**

Electronic bulletin boards, on-line information, interlibrary loan, and dedicated telephone lines for administrative duties should be addressed in the planning stages. Dedicated telecommunication lines, cables or fiber optic cables are necessary to meet present and future networking needs.

Consider future growth in addressing cabling and wiring needs. Additional lines may be needed for telecommunications, networking, and teleconferencing activities.

■ **Security**

All areas of the library media center should permit student access to materials and equipment, yet allow easy visual supervision by staff. Resources, plus expensive and popular electronic equipment, is housed in the library media center; therefore, particular consideration must be given to security systems. In addition to security of resources, consideration should be given to the security of personnel. The installation of an intercom system is also important.

ACTIVITIES AND OTHER DEFINED AREAS

To achieve the goal of a seamless learning environment the library media specialist is advised to choose a flexible arrangement of equipment and furniture to accommodate goals of the library media program. The size and arrangement of the center must accommodate the resources, services, and activities necessary for instruction. Reading, listening, and viewing space need to accommodate individual reading, browsing, storytelling, research, individual viewing and listening, computing, and the storage of materials to support these activities. Additional space may be necessary for small group conferences, professional collection, faculty work areas, audiovisual equipment, storage of back issues of periodicals, media production, and technical processing. Office space for library media staff provides a productive work environment and accomodates needs for confidentiality.

■ **Reading and Browsing**

This main area should be centrally located. Seating with a variety of furniture should be provided for a minimum of 15% of the student body. Library media centers should not attempt to seat more than 100 persons in any one area, unless it is divided by furniture placement into several activity centers and is adequately supervised by library media center staff. Book shelves may be used to define areas or placed around the perimeter. The book collection should be shelved around the areas, and sections should be set aside for current periodicals and newspapers. Shelving racks for front cover display of new books and current topic materials enhance a casual reading area. Electronic access stations maybe clustered or scattered throughout the library media center and the school. Sufficient space for electronic workstations with online access is essential.

- **Service:** General reading, research, and study
- **Size:** Space equal to 15% of the student enrollment. 40 square feet for 15% of the enrollment but not less than 1800 sq. ft. Seating for no fewer than 1.5 classes, determined by the enrollments of the largest class and the population served
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Tables with chairs, sofas, shelving, adjustable materials displays

■ Book Stacks

Shelving of appropriate height should be included for students at the level served: 42" for elementary, 60" for middle level, 72" for high school. Shelving of 42" is recommended for areas at all levels where visual supervision is needed. Wall shelving may be higher than center shelving.

- **Service:** Fiction, nonfiction, paperbacks, professional materials
- **Size:** 10 standard books per foot of shelving, 20 picture books per foot
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Attractive, high quality hardwood, metal, or other durable. scratch-resistant material for stacks; matte finish to reduce glare

■ Reference

Students should be encouraged to use reference resources in the most appropriate formats–print, machine-dependent, or electronic. Reference areas should contain sufficient tables to work with oversized books and specialized lighting to read small print. The reference area may be centrally located as a unit to allow access by more than one class at a time or in separate areas according to the subject.

- **Service:** Access to research in local reference resources and reference materials external to the media center
- **Size:** Large enough for class reference instruction
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Copy machine, atlas stands, index tables, microfiche readers, microfilm reader/ printer (these may also be located in a separate area designated for periodical resources), LCD panels & screens, pencil sharpeners, adjustable shelving, tables with chairs, vertical file cabinets, fax machine, modems on dedicated phone lines, and electronic workstations.

■ Circulation

Actual minimum footage for this area is difficult to define. Size and equipment should be determined by the number of staff who work at the desk at one time. The charging desk should permit convenient supervision of exits and the entire center. Space should be provided for student assistant work areas in order to provide workspace while assisting in the circulation of materials and answering patron questions. Check out and return functions should be separated so materials are not intermingled. Sufficient shelving should be available for reserve books and those needing repair. Secured storage may be needed for supplies. The circulation area may include an automated circulation station with telephone line, modem, and printer; a computer terminal; and supervised printout retrieval area. Space for a typewriter and a shelf list may also be needed.

- **Service:** Access to check out and return of materials, photocopying
- **Size:** Minimum 800-1000 sq. ft.
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Book drop, book trucks, automated or card catalogs, circulation desk with chairs, cupboards, drawers, pencil sharpener, intercom/PA system, printer, typewriter, Rolodex, computers, modem, adjustable shelving

■ Office(s)

The library media center should have an office for each library media specialist. Plan for a clearly defined office area if a separate room is not possible. This area should be centrally located for easy access to circulation.

- **Service:** Consultations, planning, administrative tasks
- **Size:** Minimum 200-300 sq. ft.
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Telephone, computer and printer, desks, storage for professional tools, secured coat closet and other appropriate storage. Glass enclosure allows visual control; glass should begin 42" or less from the floor.

■ Workroom and Audiovisual Areas

A workroom and a separate audiovisual area are useful for materials and equipment processing and minor repairs. These areas may also serve as the office area for clerical workers assigned these tasks.

- **Service:** Minor repairs, preventive maintenance of equipment and print materials, processing
- **Size:** Minimum 200-300 sq. ft.
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Computer(s), counter tops, cupboards, desk chairs, electrical outlets, file cabinets, lighting, pencil sharpener, repair materials, tools to maintain materials and equipment, shelf list catalog, shelving, sink with running water, tables to maintain materials & equipment, typewriter(s), ventilation, storage

■ Storage

Storage will depend on the school's curricular needs, cataloging methods, circulation policies, shelving philosophies, and space availability. The library media specialist should survey the market for current storage systems available through commercial sources, and most importantly, talk with other library media professionals about their methods.

- **Service:** Circulate and secure machine dependent resources and hardware
- **Size:** varies with need; centralized storage of machine dependent resources and supporting hardware requires more space
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Carts with appropriate safety features, shelving of appropriate width for items, and security system

■ Display

Bulletin boards and cases are important parts of the educational and public relations activities of the library media center. Bulletin boards should be placed in the hall outside the center to attract attention and in strategic positions within the library media center where they will not interfere with shelving. For display of valuable items, a locked case with lighting and adjustable shelving is desirable. Centers should limit bulletin boards and cases throughout the center to a maintainable number.

- **Service:** Displays and exhibits, notices
- **Size:** Vary with need
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Bulletin boards, glass case(s) with lock(s), adjustable shelving, lighting

■ Listening and Viewing Areas

These areas provide facilities for the use of audiovisual material and may vary from listening carrels to small soundproof rooms. In either case, there must be access to electrical outlets. If small rooms are used, visual supervision and proper ventilation and lighting are essential.

- **Service:** Space for individual and small group listening and viewing (1 per 100 students)
- **Size:** Varies with need. Note: Each carrel requires approximately 16 sq. ft. of floor space
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Electrical outlets or strips, listening stations, monitors, players, projectors, screens, video hook-ups, computers, flexible carrels or dividers, tables, chairs, dry-erase marker boards

■ Storytelling

Many elementary library media centers should include a storytelling area. It can be a carpeted area set off by low stacks or a corner with risers. When not in use for storytelling, children will find it a good browsing/reading area. However, this should be in addition to, but not supplant, regular seating. A rocking chair may be used to provide a special place for the storyteller. Projection facilities, a dry-erase marker board and lighting control permit a variety of storytelling possibilities. Careful consideration should be given to pits or other structural features that inhibit flexibility.

- **Service:** Storytelling and reading aloud
- **Size:** 150 sq. ft. (can be absorbed in other areas)
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Carpeting, electrical outlets, projection facilities, and lighting controls.

■ Production Area

In addition to space and storage areas for production equipment and supplies, there should be small and large work areas for the production of curriculum-related projects and resource materials.

- **Service:** Housing for production materials, production of slides, transparencies, posters, charts, maps, bulletin boards, three-dimensional models, etc. Minor repairs, preventive maintenance of equipment & print materials, processing
- **Size:** Minimum 800-1000 sq. ft.
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Multimedia workstations, digital cameras, scanner, photographic equipment, chairs/stools, copy stand, counters, electrical outlets, laminator, letter die cutter, paper cutter, refrigerator, shelving, sink with running water, slide sorter, and specialized lighting and ventilation, computer(s), locking cupboards, desks/tables and chairs, file cabinets, lighting, pencil sharpener, repair materials, tools to maintain materials & equipment, typewriter(s)

■ **Audio/Video Studio**

For quality tape production, a soundproof audio/video studio with acoustical treatment is desirable. For convenience, this studio should be adjacent to the local production area and equipment storage. Adequate staffing is a major factor in the decision to include a studio. Separate areas are needed for production equipment and sound-protected studio activity.

- **Service:** Production of audio and video tapes
- **Size:** Minimum 400 sq. ft.
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Acoustical treatment, cable TV facilities, camera, closed circuit TV distribution, electrical outlets, specialized lighting, microphones, audio-mixer (with speakers and monitoring system), video monitors, radio receivers, audio cassette & videocassette recorders, video special effects generator, video switcher, compact disc player, audio cassette player, multimedia workstations, digital cameras, scanner, proper ventilation

■ **Darkroom**

Film developing requires a light-secure facility and equipment for developing and enlarging film. Depending on staffing and the number of students to be served, the darkroom may be located near the local production area or in the area where photography is taught. Water and appropriate plumbing must be available.

- **Service:** Film developing, general film processing, enlarging
- **Size:** Minimum 150-200 sq. ft.
- **Equipment/Furniture Considerations:** Counter tops, door (light secure), dryer, enlarger, electrical outlets, exposure equipment, special lighting, print paper, shelving, refrigerator, sink with running water, proper ventilation

■ **Restroom(s)**

If space permits, restroom(s) for staff and/or students are especially important if other school restroom facilities are located away from the center and not available when the center is secured from the rest of the school. Handicapped accessible facilities are a necessity.

FURNITURE

Changing emphases in the curriculum, in access to information, in instructional methods, and in the total library media center program may necessitate different space definitions. Therefore, the design of the space and the selection of furniture should permit flexible arrangements. Furniture should be chosen with specific activities in mind and should be conveniently arranged so various types of media can be used effectively. Furniture should be selected with the needs of varying sizes of children and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifications in mind. The library media specialist may choose to provide an informal atmosphere with casual furniture such as bean bag chairs, easy chairs, and sofas. Safety features (e.g. rounded corners) should always be considered.

■ **Tables and Chairs**

The standard library media center table is a rectangular 3' by 5' table which seats four comfortably. Many centers use 48" round tables which add a pleasant informal touch, although they provide less usable working surface than rectangular tables. Trapezoidal tables lend themselves to a variety of groupings and are easily interchanged. Tables range in height from 24" to 28" and an elementary school should have 24", 26", and 28" heights with as many of the 26" height as the other two combined. Matching chairs should measure 10" less than the table height.

Secondary schools should have both the 26" and 28" heights. Tables with adjustable heights may provide for varying needs in K-12 programs. Elementary schools will find slant-top tables very useful for picture book reading and display.

■ **Computer Tables and Chairs**

Specially designed tables for standing or sitting at terminals must meet differing user needs. The advice of a consultant or examination of the ergonomic issues in the literature will be helpful in assuring that proper keyboard height and design, appropriate table and chair height, and screen position are appropriate and adaptable for the various sizes of users. Other factors to consider are privacy and handicapped access.

■ **Carrels**

Carrels, with and without electrical outlets, may be considered for quiet study and individual listening and viewing. The visual barrier on a carrel should be above eye level for a seated average-sized student. Each carrel needs adequate lighting and a chair for comfortable seating. If carrels are used, location should be carefully planned to permit adequate supervision. Carrels require approximately 16 sq. ft. of space each to accommodate a computer and printer.

■ **Circulation Desk**

The circulation desk should be large enough to accommodate all people expected to work in the area at one time. Interchangeable modular units which provide shelves, drawers, a book drop, desk work space, and computer workstations areas are recommended. Secondary school charging desks should be no more than 32" high.

■ **File Cabinets**

File cabinets should be legal-sized with accordion or hanging folders. Wider file cabinets may be used for convenient, accessible storage of pamphlets, clippings, pictures, folded maps, and transparencies. Also available are large storage cabinets with shallow drawers, useful for storing large art prints, flat maps, posters and oversized art, and production supplies.

■ **Atlas and Dictionary Stands**

Specially designed free-standing atlas and dictionary stands are available to house, protect, and display these resources. Revolving table stands are also available.

■ **Shelving**

All shelving should be sturdy and adjustable. Shelves can be of hardwood, synthetic material or steel of a quality to resist scratches, dents, and rust. Wooden shelving should not exceed 3 feet to prevent sagging. Metal shelving without slip resistant surfaces should be avoided. Quality and safety are primary considerations in selection of shelving. Whether shelves are double-faced or single-faced will depend on placement in the library media center. Free standing shelving should have backs and should be sturdy enough not to “sway” and should be anchored to resist earthquakes. High shelves should be fastened to the ceiling or wall. The types and amount of shelving will depend upon current size and anticipated growth of the collection, types of media to be shelved, and the manner in which media are shelved:(e.g. integrated shelving or separate shelving by type).

General Standard Specifications for Shelving

Type	Capacity Estimate	Depth	Height
Standard books	30 per 3 ft. shelf	8 or 10 in.	5-6 ft.
Reference books	18 per 3 ft. shelf	10 or 12 in.	6-7 ft.
Picture books*	60 per 3 ft. shelf	12 in.	30-42 in.
Periodicals	3-4 per 3 ft. shelf	16 in.	5-6 ft. standing
Video cassettes	30 per 3 ft. shelf	8 or 10 in.	5-6 ft.
Sound filmstrip boxed sets and oversized media	15-18 per 3 ft. shelf	12 or 16 in.	5-6 ft.
AV equipment	1-2 per 3 ft. shelf	18-24 in.	ceiling
Compact disks	100 per 3 ft. shelf	6 in.	6-7 ft.

*Sections need 1/4" wide partitions or dividers, 5" high, and spaced 7"-8" apart on each shelf.

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)
LIBRARY REQUIREMENTS

General:

The design of all public areas of a library shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 Legislation and Related Sections to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 29 U.S.C §706(8), 794,794a

Forward Reach: If the clear floor space only allows forward approach the maximum high forward reach allowed shall be 48 inches. The minimum forward reach is 15 inches. Maximum reach height of 54 and 48 inches preferred irrespective of reach allowed.

Side Reach: If the clear floor space allows parallel approach by a person in a wheel chair, the maximum high side reach allowed shall be 54 inches and the low side reach shall be no less than 9 inches above the floor.

The standards include reading and study areas, stacks, reference, reserve areas and special facilities or collections.

Reading & Study Areas:

At least 5 percent or a minimum of one of each element of fixed seating, tables or study carrels shall comply with ADA standards.

Seating for people in wheelchairs at tables, counters and work surfaces should provide knee spaces at least 27 inches high, 30 inches wide and 19 inches deep. Aisle space at magazine displays shall be a minimum of 36 inches. If the clear floor space only allows forward approach the maximum height forward reach allowed shall be 48 inches. If the clear floor space allows parallel approach by a person in a wheelchair, the maximum high side reach shall be 54 inches and the low side reach shall be no less than 9 inches above the floor.

The tops of tables, study carrels and work surfaces shall be from 28 to 34 inches from the floor.

The space required for a 360 degree turn is a clear space of 60 inches.

The code states all traffic control or book security gates shall comply with the standards, which indicate that doorways shall have a minimum clear opening of 32 inches.

Check-Out Areas:

At least one lane at each check-out area shall be from 28 to 34 inches from the floor. Any traffic control or book security gates or turnstiles shall have a minimum clear opening of 32 inches.

On-Line Public Access (OPAC) or Card Catalog:

Seating for the electronic OPAC should provide knee space at least 27 inches high, 30 inches wide and 19 inches deep. The computer work surfaces shall be from 28 to 34 inches from the floor. To fully meet needs, screen magnification or voice input/outprint may need to be provided.

Minimum clear aisle space at traditional card catalogs, magazine displays or reference stacks shall be a minimum of 36 inches. Maximum reach height shall be 48 inches irrespective of forward or side reach allowed.

Stacks:

Minimum clear aisle width between stacks should be at least 36 inches wide, with a minimum clear aisle width of 42 inches preferred where possible. If a turn of 180 degrees needs to be made at the end of the bookcases then 48 inches should be allowed. The suggested maximum bookshelf height is 72 inches and the maximum reach is 54 inches from the floor. The side reach down is 9 inches from the floor; front reach is 15 inches from the floor. Shelf height in stack areas is unrestricted.

"ADA regulation makes it clear that a public school is not required to make its existing facilities totally accessible where other methods are effective in achieving compliance." (Grubb, Deborah. "Meeting Disabled Students' Needs without Breaking the Bank". *School Planning &Management***,** May 1997. p 26.**)** Thus the library media specialist may be required to develop creative methods to provide services to handicapped students. ADA regulations should be examined when remodeling to assess if building modifications are readily achievable. When planning a new facility ADA regulations should be adhered to.

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(NOTE: Check current library supply catalogs for current options for furniture and equipment.)